



Week 3: The Opposition

1. Name a bad experience you have had because you didn't read the fine print?
2. As you've listened to the message or as you read the Scripture passage, what is God bringing to your mind and heart?
3. Read Nehemiah 4:1-3. Why do you think it was so infuriating to Sanballat that the Jews were rebuilding Jerusalem?
4. Read 2 Tim. 3:12, Rom. 12:19. If you never faced opposition because of your faith, what would that tell you about the way you lived your life? Read Neh. 4:10-14, God's people responded to opposition with fear, Nehemiah responded with faith (4:14), when you face opposition, how do you usually respond? What did you learn from Nehemiah?
5. Stepping out in faith and engaging your burden will bring External Opposition. What external opposition do you expect if you went public with the burden God is birthing in you? Pastor Dan shared that the question pertaining to external opposition is "*Who is it coming from?*" Who are the people you can share your burden with, and trust their guidance?
6. Stepping out in faith and engaging your burden will bring Internal Opposition. What are the "negative scripts" that will hold you back? How do you think staying connected (to God) will lead you to courage? What does that look like in your life?

**Our external opposition will only be as loud as
Our internal insecurities allow them to be!**

Father, thank You for not leaving us to face opposition on our own. Thank You that we can trust You to guide us and protect us while we continue pursuing the work You've given us. Help us trust You to fight for us no matter the strength of the opposition we're facing. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

This week's Spiritual Practice: Silence¹

God appeared to Elijah after his suicidal depression and flight from Jezebel, He told him to stand and wait for the presence of the Lord to pass by. But God did not appear in ways he had in the past. He was not in the wind (as with Job), an earthquake (as in Mount Sinai and the Ten Commandments), or fire (as in the burning bush with Moses). As we read in 1 Kings 19:12, God finally revealed Himself to Elijah in "a sound of sheer silence." The English translation of God coming "in a still, small voice" does not capture the original Hebrew intent, but what could the translators do?

How do you hear silence? Dallas Willard calls silence and solitude the two most radical disciplines of the Christian life. Similarly, Henri Nouwen wrote that "without solitude it is almost impossible to live a spiritual life." In solitude, we separate ourselves from people and things in order to attend to God. In stillness, we quiet every inner and outer voice to listen for God's "sheer silence."

Silence and solitude are probably the most challenging and least experienced disciplines among Christians today. We live in a world of noise and distractions. And yet, in Psalm 37:7a, Scripture commands us to "be still before the lord and wait patiently for him." It also calls us to "be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10a).

Though it's a struggle, waiting for God in the midst of silence ushers us into His restful presence. For Elijah and for us, the silence after chaos abounds with the presence of God. He spoke to Elijah out of the silence and He also speaks to us.

Practical Guidelines: Beginning this week with 2 minutes once a day.

- settle into a comfortable and quiet place. Take a few deep breaths, allowing yourself to inhale and exhale slowly.
- Begin with a simple prayer, or scripture such as "Here I am Lord," or "Abba Father," or "Jesus." Or reciting Ps. 37:7 or 46:10 (above). This prayer expresses your focus and desire for one thing, to spend time with God and to recognize His presence with you...a reality many of us don't take the time to attend to.
- When distractions come - and they will - entrust them to God's care, say your simple prayer, or scripture again and turn your thoughts back to God.

Give yourself grace, especially at the beginning. This is a counter-cultural practice and it won't be easy! But when you choose to **BE** with God before **DOING** for God, you are choosing to allow Him to take His place at the center of your life. You are letting go of control, your agenda, and your need to **DO**. That's a big deal! Good luck!

¹ adapted from <https://www.emotionallyhealthy.org/practicing-silence/> and Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Day by Day: A 40-day Journey with the Daily Office* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 14.